

State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”



Officers

Alvin O. Gillard, Executive Director
Cleveland L. Horton II, Deputy Director
Nicolette Young, Assistant Director
Glendora C. Hughes, General Counsel
Kara N. Hunt, Ph.D., Director of Education & Outreach

Governor
Larry Hogan
Lt. Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford
Commission Chairperson
Gary C. Norman, Esq.
Commission Vice Chairperson
Janssen E. Evelyn, Esq.
Commissioners
Diane E. Bernier
Eileen M. Levitt, SPHR, SHRM-SCP
Rabbi Binyamin Marwick
Magdalena S. Navarro, MSc
Jeff Rosen
Gina McKnight-Smith, PharmD, MBA
Stephanie Suerth, MPA, CCEP

Maryland Commission on Civil Rights Statement In Recognition Of National Immunization Awareness Month

During August, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights and its Board of Commissioners join health professionals in raising awareness about National Immunization Awareness Month.

This special emphasis category promotes vaccinations by persons of all ages and all abilities. With the ongoing spread of the Delta variant to COVID-19, awareness and understanding of vaccines and the role they play in public health is important.

In addition to immunizing against the COVID-19 virus, the Board of Commissioners emphasizes generally that immunization is a tool in protecting against a host of illnesses, including, tetanus, hepatitis A and B, measles, polio, and even seasonal influenza. The Board of Commissioners recognizes that longstanding health disparities may inhibit easy access to these protective measures.

In the United States, less than 73% of children receive all the recommended vaccinations.¹ The inequities in immunization begin in childhood, contributing to health disparities across the lifespan. Inequities in immunization reflect the overall barriers and gaps in healthcare experienced by a large number of historically marginalized groups, including, people of color and people with disabilities.

“Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthier. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.”²

We applaud the efforts of the Maryland Vaccine Equity Task Force and local Departments of Health who collaborate with community organizations to provide COVID-19 vaccinations. The Board of Commissioners hopes that the lessons learned from these outreach efforts will inform on-going work on health equity.

¹ Kulkarni AA, Desai RP, Alcalá HE, Balkrishnan R. Persistent Disparities in Immunization Rates for the Seven-Vaccine Series Among Infants 19–35 Months in the United States. *Health Equity*. 2021;5(1):135-139. doi:10.1089/heap.2020.0127

² Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Definition of Health Equity. Retrieved from: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html>

During this National Immunization Awareness Month, the Commission echoes Governor Larry Hogan’s call that all Marylanders who are able to “please go get a vaccine as quickly as you can. Do it for yourself, do it for your family, do it for your friends, and do it so that all of us can put this global pandemic behind us.”³

³ Retrieved from: <https://governor.maryland.gov/2021/04/21/governor-hogan-announces-no-arm-left-behind-initiatives-to-get-vaccines-to-every-marylander-who-wants-one/>